



**United States Department of Justice  
United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**

**Frank J. Magill,  
Acting United States Attorney**

David Anderson, Public Affairs Specialist  
(612) 664-5684; cell: (612) 730-2251

# **News Release**

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## **2 east metro women indicted on smuggling wildlife, possessing anabolic steroids**

Two women from the eastern Twin Cities metropolitan area were indicted yesterday in federal court in connection with smuggling protected wildlife into the United States for financial gain.

Pa Lor, unknown age, Oakdale, and Tia Yang, 36, Lake Elmo, were each charged May 12 with one count of conspiracy to smuggle wildlife and one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute anabolic steroids.

Their indictment alleges that from October 2005 to August 2006, the two women did knowingly and willfully conspire with each other to fraudulently bring wildlife into the U.S. for sale and offer wildlife for sale at a booth at the International Marketplace in St. Paul. The wildlife included Asian elephant, giant squirrel, leopard cat, mongoose, and the elegant flying squirrel.

"The Service has become increasingly concerned about the international trade in raw endangered wildlife products," said Patrick Lund, resident agent in charge of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's St. Paul office. "The market, which is fueled by traditional Asian medicinal and cultural needs, is having a devastating effect on some of the world's most critically endangered wildlife. Apprehending those that illegally commercialize endangered wildlife is our highest priority."

The U.S. is a signatory to an international treaty aimed at protecting certain species of fish and wildlife against over-exploitation. According to the treaty, some of those protected species may be imported into the U.S. if prior to the importation, the importers obtains and possesses a valid U.S. import permit and a valid export permit from where the country the animal originates.

On Oct. 23, 2005, Lor arrived at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport from Laos, and did not declare any animal or wildlife items on her Customs and Border Protection Declaration form. During an inspection of Lor's baggage, approximately 1,388 individual pieces

of undeclared wildlife were found, the indictment alleges.

On Nov. 17, 2005, and June 28, 2006, authorities purchased several wildlife items from Lor at a booth in the International Marketplace, a booth leased by Yang. On Aug. 2, 2006, law enforcement executed a search warrant at the market booth, and recovered numerous wildlife items. These items included: black-striped weasel, gibbon, leaf monkey, monitor lizard, tapir, slider turtles, and small-clawed otter.

The indictment also alleges that from October 2005 to August 2006 the two women knowingly and intentionally conspired to distribute and possess with intent to distribute approximately 184 units of a substance containing a detectable amount of anabolic steroids.

If convicted, both Lor and Yang face potential maximum penalties of five years in prison on the smuggling count and five years on the steroid count. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Department of the Interior-Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney LeeAnn K. Bell.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.